

## Aspects of Esthetic-Artistic Values in Popular Gjirokastrian Costumes



### Ethnoculture

**Keywords:** artistic-esthetic value, elements, popular dressings, decoration.

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### Abstract

In the artistic-esthetic evaluation of popular dressings it is important to mention some tools, which make the artistic and esthetic expression of the mainly Lab region in its majority, with Gjirokastra as the epicenter. Popular mentality as a laconic confession through lines, songs, for the amazing popular dressings, gives arguments, where each of us reads and analyses through linguistic structures those, which are expressed as roots for valuable ideas of the esthetic aspect. The popular passage “ç’bukuri ke mbi vete” as a piece taken from the sung dance «Lunxhëri plot lezete” with “Nurin” etc. implies the usage of the artistic expression tools of the popular decoration with colors and ornaments. Naturally these two elements in relation with other figurative elements such as composition, drawing and invoice within specific decorative systems, reflect added expressive power. In order for this analysis to be as reliable as it can be, we can include some points of view such as: The decorative bed in the popular dressing; Composition; Drawing and coloration in decorations; artistic invoice in decoration (technical and coloristic invoice); Collaboration of the esthetic expression tools. As a special appearance will be: The interweaving of stylistic features and esthetic expression (monumental figuration, figurative design, figurative laconism, coloristic and graphic contrast). The connection of the popular dressing with the pathos, rhythm and epic character of the polyphony, with the monumental character of the Gjirokastra house etc., with the epic and lyric, grows its figurative importance and its artistic and esthetic values. In the end of this paper we will also present the bibliography.

### Some Means that Formulate the Esthetic Expression

Specific figurative tools with a wide usage scope, highlight the esthetic expression of the popular costumes of the area and city of Gjirokastra, since they are its first visual contact. Historical circumstances, economic conditions, the highlander mentality, the residents' masterful character and the mountain nature as subjective and objective factors have defined the esthetic gjirokastrian soul. All of this is presented with a distinct specific popular applied art. The masters' inspiration from the majestic nature of this southern area by being intertwined with the autochthonous legacy has widened the preservation space for the decorations' artistic expression, at the same time this is all expressed by unfolding an epic-lyric spirit with a generalizing character. The return to the popular wisdom and to the lunxhiot's passage: “ç’bukuri ke mbi vete, Lunxhëri plot lezete” (what beauty you have bestowed upon you, oh prettiest Lunxhëri), makes us feel the figurative value in the esthetic plane as a core of ideas. Why? Because when reviewing this concise passage, that mentions and places in action means of artistic expression of the dressings and popular decoration, through dialectic structure that is connected with these two upper phrase moments (beauty, prettiest), opens the possibility for a deeper analysis. In the lunxhiot's esthetic judgment the saying “ç’bukuri ke mbi vete”, is used in the narrow meaning with a practical, structured typological and artistic character, of the costumes and textiles on the bearers' body and on the housing environments. With “Lunxhëri plot lezete” in the wider meaning, the field of esthetic radiance goes even further by including adaptations of the costumes' adornments in other directions like : dancing, music, the building.

The term “prettiest” includes the esthetic intellect of the residents connected with covers, carpets, etc. but also with the landscape, mountain nature and the climate. The above approaches conclude that the colors and the ornaments through the esthetic laconism artistically act within the decorations of the entire manufacturing of the gjirokastrian village woman. This passage with its sounding, its very unique content, testifies a logical continuing of the natural tradition in the field of popular costumes. Proceeding with this reasoning, from “ç’nur që ka” it is sensed ( with these kind of colors and ornaments) that our reasoning receives a wider point of view and also where they really differ from other provinces. All of this appears with a special emphasis, corresponding to their social functioning of the popular decorations. But this is solidified by approaching also the relationship of the colors and ornaments with other means of the artistic expression such as: compositional balance, contrast, harmony, unity, symmetry and asymmetry, emphasis, center of interest etc.

The philosophy of treating the colors to almost monochrome it's in a powerful contrast and at the same time harmony. There where the esthetic laconism shows the sensitivity of the man towards colors and figures. Colors and ornaments intuitively used from the demos creator, as visible means. These are combined with elements and figurative principles through a wider range of sight, that are put in action with other means like composition, drawing and facture. The expressive power of the gjirokastrian dressings is expressed through colors and ornaments and also other figurative elements combined. This presents a high level of gjirokastrian intellect, a unique case like the one of Lunxhëria that echoed from the distant Byzantine Empire. "The dressing of the women of Lunxhëria and northern Pogone... is one of the most beautiful, be it for the material used, or the artistic values. In this dressing, more than anywhere else, it is felt the influence of the townie dressings."

The nobility that radiates through the beauty of the ornaments in the popular costume's decorations is connected with the treatment in the decorative layer, the drawing, color spectrum and composing, artistic facture (technical, coloristic) but also the interaction of the means of the artistic and esthetic expression.

### **The Decorative Layer of the Popular Costume**

The decorative layer where decorations are placed is formed from the general structure of the popular costume's material. Why? This structure within itself has the shape of the cut, the sewing and the embroidery which gives the plastic, harmonizing of its unique parts with the whole costume and that it is processed on the esthetic part. In treating of the shape of the dressing, what hold part are the decorative surface and line, the silhouette or the artistic contour, since they create pieces or special parts, where the plastic effects through the decorative volume that is created by the costume over the bearer's body. When in treating of the shape are added colors and decorations, all the participating elements are more easily harmonized. Hence parts with higher surface that are treated, differ from the northern (smaller surfaces), are heavily loaded with golden lined motives over an imported felt piece. For example pirpiria (from Voskopojë), for the rich orthodox rural layer (Zagori). Vests are so densely embroidered with golden and silver threads, that it was hard to tell the piece which they were worked on. And so were the citjane (Turkish trousers) that had their front surface and endings embroidered with golden threads. Very noticeable where the cap or the white handkerchiefs with golden threads and sparks on the side, fabric shirts created within the household economy. And these are decorated by the master tailors for the Muslim women (Gjirokastra, Libohovë and Delvinë).

The diversity and elegance of the dressings of Gjirokastra's district is made generally on a dark blue towards a black piece. The peak is reached by the harmony of all the parts of the Lunxhiot costume. The individuality of two escalations is: the upper at the wrist with the shirt's sleeves full of laces and the sleeve of Dollomalike a trapeze, the wide and much decorated sleeve of Mantos. Bellow it comes the decoration of the Fustë with klapodan, fermeleja, and over it the clothing. The focusing of the decorations in the previously mentioned parts, is a characteristic of the layer where decorations are applied. The most interesting view of the Lunxhiotë dressing is from the semi-profile position,<sup>3</sup> because from here is where the embroidered surfaces of the decorations and the laconism of the ornaments are highlighted more beautifully. Even the dressing of Dropulli (northern and southern) with the minority villages, has its embroidered surfaces more esthetically and beautifully organized from the frontal view. because from there they are seen as more organized.

### **Drawing, Coloration and Composing of the Decorations**

Ornamentics executes very important esthetic functions and naturally social in the popular clothing, something otherwise impossible to do. And for that the place where it is applied is always visible, that's why decorations remain an interesting element of the artistic and typological structure, of the popular Gjirokastra's village clothing. Even though these are one or some parts of the costume they cannot be valued as artistic extras, on the contrary they serve as the dot on the "i".

Elements of the figurative art such as drawing, coloration, contrast, composing, and harmony of the ornaments play the highlighting role of the artistic expression of the decorations and textiles of the popular clothing. Drawing of the ornaments has the means to loyally serve to the symbolic and aiming for the symbolical characteristic silhouette. The continued line, seemingly free, but within an invisible ruling, was the strictness in circling the shape of the ornaments. This is tied with the laconic style, with the warmth of the bent line. In the end everything in the making of the motives is connected with the embroidering technique. Meaning that the non-fully angled structure in the treating is entwisted with the structure with the laconic line. These aristocratic drawing forms of the ornaments have been practiced in the applied popular art in costumes and textiles of the highland of Lunxhëri, northern Pogon, Zagori, Dropulli, Dervicanit, etc. and the city of Gjirokastra, where each province has its own originality.

Meanwhile the drawing is like a defining means appearance of the ornamentics, composing is the means that defines the appearance of the decorative system. For the expressivity and the artistic finesse all the while of the decorative system, composing artistically affects in the organizing of the ornaments and colors. So, the popular clothing of the villages near the mountain range of Gjirokastra with a large variety of composed decorative systems in the roots are with symmetric solution, and inside of them asymmetric. At a first glance it seems as the decorative clothing system of the Lunxhëria and Dropull have nothing in common from the compositional perspective.

Knowing that, special decorative systems with free lines, while not being solidified fall close to each other with the expressive, but also laconic artistic, expression nature. If the costume of Lunxhëria presents wavy lines like the links of a chain, the Dropull clothing has fragmented lines in the majority of its decorations. All the symmetric characters within them, they seem as a system within another system as a nature of their relationship. Variety within the type gives the ideo-artistic unity between the interprovincial clothing, between villages among each other and then among the city, in Gjirokastra's mountain range.

The color of the decoration is an important means and very sensitive for the highlight of the systems and the differences between them. The colors of Lunxhëria, Zagori, and Rrëzë e Kurveleshit, the city and villages of Gjirokastra generally are dark. Those of Dropulli are lightened, the city's are also even more lightened, and on top of these colors are built the contrasting ornaments.

Strong contrast over dark or light backgrounds is achieved through the masters' artistic intuition and talent. The decorative processing has found different paths of rules: sometimes with the chromatic harmony of the warm and cold, sometimes with the symmetry and asymmetry within them, sometimes through colors, almost nearly toned backgrounds, but most of the time with a strong contrast. Colors such as white, black (blue, green, dark cherry) and some of the other colors are in the palette of the costumes, in the background of the decorative systems. As a conclusion, the usage of the dark colors in general in the background of the decorative systems with the contrast of the golden ornaments in an expressive laconism, is a common aspect of the decorative systems in costumes and textiles of the highland of Gjirokastra.

### **Artistic Facture of the Decoration**

A special interest is presented by the esthetic qualities, that the surface of the material receives and the plastic effect of the decoration on it, meaning the artistic facture of the decoration. As it is known the first material that is fur or even cotton create different factures (soft, mild). This facture as a base material depends on the working technique (kitting, weaving, needlework, embroidering etc.), depends on the type and thickness of the working thread (golden thread, wool yarn, cotton) and from the compacting of the material during work. Rough material with wool as the first material for the making of the costumes gives us a facture that does not

permit a linear play not even in a miniature, on the contrary, it imposes a compacted decoration with a relief on the applied location.

The role of the facture is very evaluative and in woolen parts without decoration or on cotton realized onloom. But besides them the usage of the cohë made of shajak that was imported, with dark colors, complete graphic sound, meaning that the evaluative role of the entire decorative systems, of the ornaments with golden threads is for the solemn magic of the Lunxhëria and Gjirokastra in general. If the artistic facture is presented as the facture with the type of relief, technical, colorful, the dominant facture in Gjirokastra's clothing is the relief type. "The short vest that went down to a bit below the chest was embroidered with so many golden threads that it was hard to tell the piece on which it was prepared on". The esthetic appearance is connected not only to the functional role on the body of the bearer but also with looking good.

Artistic appearance is also completed by the artistic effect that the embroidered golden threads give on the clothing material, in the form of a light relief. This linear decoration creates through the embroidering plastic cracks on the surface of the cohes, meanwhile the decorative system compacted on Gjirokastra's highland vests takes effect on their entire surface. Finesse is present in the lines of the threads entwined with the gajtane processed with motive load, white shirts with white thread embroidered sleeves (color facture); with lace pieces needle worked in textile clothing, fur socks (technical facture: knitting, weaving). In general even in Gjirokastra's clothing the color facture is used as in all of Albania thus creating a serious presentation of the ornaments.

Much like the trained hand of a master in painting that plays almost in monochrome in order to maintain a balance between the detail and the bigger picture, a contrast with harmony, the natural with the magnificent so do the masters of the Gjirokastra's south intuitively have and feel over the decorative size. Occupied and non-occupied surfaces from the decorative systems are balanced, serving during the composing as a harmonizing measure on the shape, decoration, plastic and coloring. Figuratively by materializing we feel the interpretive ability as the essence of fantasy, realizing masterfulness from the experience and the intuition within the unwritten rules. The different decorative schemes in these dressings first and foremost highlight the interpretive sensitivity of the Gjirokastra's masters. So the essence of the incomparable achievements is a general aspect of Gjrikostra, even though in some aspects more than in others, where harmonization includes shape, plastic, decoration, colors of the clothing, in a general artistic physiognomy.

### **The Interaction Between the Means of the Esthetic Expression**

In the entirety of the means of the esthetic expression we see on popular clothing and textiles, the interaction as a single fist at the decorations of Gjirokastra and its suburbs. Naturally that the interaction between them is between different, non-equal parts. And their role cannot be taken as isolated from each-other much like one cannot conceive the finger of the hand away from each-other. They give and take between each-other just like the shape of the costumes with the plastics and its own decoration do. The interaction excludes the independence the ornaments have towards their color, the independent artistic figuration from the practical function, etc. The complexity of the action of the means of the esthetic expression bypasses the single destination of an applied art and frontally accomplishes the requests for the colors, ornaments, shape and plastic, contrast and facture, the artistic highlight of the popular costumes. Colors alone are the vanguard of the entirety of the means of the esthetic expression and with the usage of the popular symbology, we have adapted those means in creativity. So the means of the popular decorative esthetic expression have become one body, as a support for each-other giving us outstanding stylistic features.

### Intermingling of the Stylistic Features with the Esthetic Expression

Intermingling of the means of the esthetic expression in the first line of usage in the popular clothing has unavoidably highlighted common stylistic features in the decorations of the popular costumes of Gjirokastra and its suburbs. Monumental figuration, figurative laconism, visual dynamism, coloristic and graphic contrast, harmony, compositional balance, emphasis, symmetry and asymmetry, unity of the figurative elements, are part of the expression in other genres of the popular southern Gjirokastra's art, like dancing, polyphonic music, architecture etc.

Through decorations, shape, coloring, plastics of the costumes as characteristics we have the versatile and monumental figuration. This character presents ruling ornamental blocks with views full of imposing, almost solemn seriousness, where as an invisible thread can be felt on the façade of the magnificent civic architecture, on the interiors, on the clothing with artistic representation of the southern Gjirokastra. The Lunxhiote dressing and the kilt taken as an example with the harmonic volumes as in one sculptural ensemble to be amazed at the black and white rapport, with the radiance of the embroidered golden threads making it seem as if men and women were one body through their clothing. Swimming from one position to another between stretching of the shape from the static into an explosion of movements, the feet of the dancer drag into "flight" the voluminous masses in accordance with their shape vertically from down, up, accompanied by the waiving of the shirt and vest on top of the tufted opinga. The opposite esthetic abilities of the clothing do not interfere in the interaction of black and white of the costumography configuration, on the contrary they complete each-other, the white kilt with the dark background lunxhiote.

The whiteness of the voluminous kilt, with the capedqylaf, the white glittered shirt, the quiet and the plastic cleanliness of the men's clothing with silaun in the middle that adds even more contrast light that by staying by the side of the women's lunxhiote clothing with the dark background full of brightness of motives and laconic language. If in the northern and central Albania, the figurative imposing is only present, it is in the south that it reaches its peak, in the gjirokastrian couple where with all the middle belt, and different parts of the shirt interruptions we still have the verticality guarded with wisdom.

The intertwining between the contrasted coloristic and ornamentals' effects, while enriching the general costume composing, comes forth as majestic, in its classic ancient character peak. Composing the ornaments in separate parts acts according to the compositional micro rules always striking to enrich the artistic values naturally, within a general composing and artistic harmony. The artistic vitality is transferred to us from with costumes with traditional motives' decorations and new flow. The arched shape of the motives over the dark background of the cohes gives volume to the clothing and they organically see each other's valuation. The vertical surface of the decorations in the clothing shows the pyramidal development of the ornament, as a mirroring of the plants growth towards heights, with linear elegant ratios as in the search for the light of the sun. But the treating of the ornaments with a golden thread over a dark clothing in itself emits the feeling of the costume radiating, and even further for the person carrying this costume radiating kindness, and the human loyalty. As Associate Prof. Dr. A. Bido: "Decorations enrich the view of the popular costumes and traditional textiles, they give artistic vitality, and make it more emotional and exciting".

The fulfilment of the clothing with ornaments takes us to the figurative dynamism with the goal of the voluminous adaption of the decorated object. Even at the first sight we distinguish monumental figuration, starting from a multitude of figurative elements where rapports between them are linear and the silhouette of the kilt with the woolen Gunethrown on one shoulder is a great highlighter of this fact. Like so the figurative load of the Lunxhiotë clothing through the figurative verticality unfolds its monumentality.

The general element of the esthetic expression in the gjirokastrian costumes is also the figurative laconism, where the rhythm and expressivity are finalized in compositional structures with the color of the cohes

and the ornaments, between contrasted and harmonic rapports. The special stylistic quality in ornamentics among decorative systems is without any doubt the graphic and coloristic contrast. This contrast of the ornaments, gjirokastrian decorative systems takes its greatest value from the simultaneous concept of compositional balance, of the symmetry and asymmetry within itself, the emphasis, and the result is that this ornamentics becomes the center of the artistic interest. The climate of the esthetic expression has created a layer of development of the general stylistic qualities, not only of the decorations in clothing and textiles but also in other genres of the popular art such as monumental architecture of the residence, the polyphonic song, popular dancing, prose and poetry.

A native is fond of the look that the kilt has especially while dancing, when the plastic volumes of 60 to 400 kinds are horizontally and vertically moved, transitioning from a majestic pose into a optic explosion of the entire body and costume movement; the Lunxhiote woman that becomes part of the nobbling dressings plastic that is full of ornamental figurative poetry. Gjirokastra's mastery is not only confined to the popular costume, to the man and woman couple, but lies on the musical soul, on the polyphonic singing in different variations as a pearl of the world's musical treasure. This mastery lies on the architectural ensemble of the monumental residence of the city of stone, a treasure of UNESCO. The mastery continues to enfold on the poetic spirit, the words of wisdom in the popular proverbs that have transmitted the echo of wisdom all over the Albanian territories.

All of this are attributed to the actor, director, architect, scenographer, construction, master, musician (composer and singer), choreographer, dancer, writer, cicerone of the history and the life of Gjirokastra. Thus nobility and manliness through the esthetic expression of the popular clothing became stronger through the epic tones of the southern rhapsodies, joys, wars, laments, life and death especially of Gjirokastra. This epic-lyric spirit as an echo of the three mountain ranges of the Zagori, Lunxheri, Dropull, rural and townie folklore, becomes part of the artistic costume's structure and autochthonous textiles. The feeling of the residence-costume interaction highlights the construction-decorativeness rapports of the residence, artistic costume shape-decoration rapports in a "same requests" viewing angle, and harmony between details and the whole. The high esthetic attendance in the monumental contouring of the residence and also of the costume come from the same source of the gjirokastrian emotional creative world, of course of the bearer that as a representative of this communion in the social and artistic function.

### **Social Function of the Popular Artistic Decorative Costume Systems of Gjirokastra**

The versatility of the highland rural and civil life of Gjirokastra is accompanied, expressed with a "veil" that covers and enriches the real aspects, with the monumentality and decorativeness of the residences and popular dressings. The spiritual world is a mirroring of the events of life through the artistic structures. The ethnographic point of view of the events, of the living environments is fulfilled with the costumes and textiles in the emotional and mental aspects of the bearer in days of joy and sorrow. So has the enrichment of life happened with clothing and textiles, with artistic structures, and the emotional idea depth of the decorations on different environments and events, as the song goes "Lunxhëri plot lezete, ç'bukuri ke mbi vete" (with dressings). The ability of Gjirokastra's villager, vivid and combative, in joys and sorrows, in celebrations and war appears even in common events. Known is the genetic origin of the same nature of reaction in cases in both south and north for the deeds and deaths of the brave. The gjirokastrian survival in the everyday vortex, in assemblies, weddings or deaths is also connected to the effect of working abroad, strongly expresses all these aspects.

"In the popular esthetic mentality exists the color trinomial white, red, and black. In assemblies we see the atmosphere that represents the vital line birth-wedding-death." In assembly we see the solemn atmosphere where the costumes show the status of each with its own elegance, with light and contrast, brightness and almost monochrome kept colors. In weddings we see the festive atmosphere where the clothing sound of white, ochre and black, decorative braid and the golden embroidering, as a joyful and noble décor. On the other hand, in

death the bleak surrounding completed with dark clothing was accompanied with singed screams and cries that are improvised. Here spawns the question: Why? What makes the difference in these dressings?

Naturally as it has been said before that when the girl went as a bride in the house of the husband she would bring eight kinds of wedding dresses, which had different functions for different events. The same was for the other participants, but the differences were so small that everything looked as if it goes through serious coloristic tonalities, which reminds us of the evaluation of Çelebius for Gjirokastra “the city of mourning”.

The clothing would get simpler, the decorations would be eliminated, and the darkness of the black clothing with a stately look starting from the black scarf on the head, the dress, socks, and the back shoes would complete the atmosphere of sorrow. The stately decoration would create the proper social service that indirectly within the epic nature would carry the freedom in the weddings and the collective experiencing with the humoristic polyphonic songs, dancing of joy. Like the joyful song: “...nusija e mirë, e mirë, dhëndëri si kec i shtirë, nusija kallëp sapun, dhëndëri turi majmun” and reverse.

The emotional experiencing through the entirety of the popular costumes lies on the traditional ceremonies with the harmony of the brave or lyric polyphonic songs and the dances on the gjirokastrian weddings. The gjirokastrian wedding, villager or civic alike has always required great economical preparations, accompanied outmost social intensity. The coupling of the brides dressing with popular clothing from the other women, orthodox or Muslim is matched by the clothing of the men who use more reserved colors among white, black, ochre, and gold decorations, etc. The usage of the clothing by being specified according to age classes goes towards the simplifying of the decorations for the 3rd age decorations, towards a graphic black and white, creating a generic stately background in serve centralidyllic figure full of brightness that is the bride. This way the impression is created as if the epic tableau carries in the center the dressing’s lyricism of the young ages, where the popular costume remains a mark representing the pride of the Albanian aristocratic visual past.

Nowadays the residents of the highland villages of Gjirokastra and Laberia have the qylaf with coif as a sign of identification, like the Kosovar have plisin, as unique identifying pride elements. The clothing of the habitants of the three mountain ranges of Gjirokastra despite their high price and value are not considered as relics, but on the contrary are worn everyday by adding to the value of their living environment or eating mahogany where they would eat the cornbread and brined cheese. Like the century old tree of the Mashkullorë (Masculine) where the old and new branches live together and bloom and where the breeze of smells that sway, just like that the traditional clothing that are renewed with the variation within the unwritten rules and live together in a continuous enriching from the popular wisdom. The scientific evaluation of this tradition would raise the awareness of the leaders of the folklore groups to use and rigorously reproduce the original clothing of the city and its suburbs in the popular costumes ensemble of Gjirokastra.

## Conclusion

This paper presented the review of some aspects’ artistic-esthetic values, as an object, where the means that formulate the esthetic expression are explained, where the contents of the popular decorative layer have been decoded. Drawing, composing of the decorations, the coloring all are analyzed through elements and principles of the figurative art and real ground examples. In this studying structure we have highlighted the artistic facture of the decoration for the practical ground function and the visual artistic effect of the popular costume in creating the individual stature. Naturally that the interaction of the means of artistic expression and in particular the ornaments and colors as the vanguard of these means is going to bring distinctive stylistic features. The stylistic features involved with the esthetic expression highlight the relations of popular dressing among them and their surroundings (residences, nature and atmosphere), the rapport between the general and the

details. Social functions of the artistic decorative popular gjirokastrian costumes in different aspects of life has amplified the general social values in those situations.

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